

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJ: 1976 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

REF: BRASILIA 9507

1. SUMMARY. UNOFFICIAL RESULTS OF NOVEMBER 15 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS NOW INDICATE ARENA WON 83 PERCENT OF THE MAYORALTY SEATS AND 69 PERCENT OF THE CITY COUNCILMAN SEATS. IN TERMS OF POPULAR VOTE WHICH PRESIDENT GEISEL HAD SOUGHT TO MAXIMIZE FOR ARENA AS A DISPLAY OF SUPPORT FOR HIS GOVERNMENT, ARENA APPEARS TO HAVE WON WITH A MARGIN OF ABOUT 4 MILLION VOTES. NUMBERS PERMIT PRESIDENT GEISEL TO CLAIM AN ARENA VICTORY AND FAVORABLE REFERENDUM FOR HIS GOVERNMENT. MDB HAS OUTPOLLED ARENA IN URBAN AREAS WHILE LOSING HEAVILY IN THE INTERIOR. BUT MDB HAS BROADENED ITS LOCAL BASE, IMPROVED ITS POSITION OVER 1972 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS RESULTS, AND SHOWN IT HAS POTENTIAL IN URBAN AND SOUTHERN INDUSTRIAL AREAS TO WIN SOME GOVERNORSHIPS IF DIRECT ELECTIONS ARE HELD IN 1978. BRAZILIANS REMAIN DIVIDED, HOWEVER, OVER TO WHAT DEGREE ELECTIONS WERE LOCAL PERSONALITY CONTESTS RATHER
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THAN PARTY PLEBESCITE WITH IDEOLOGICAL OVERTONES. END SUMMARY.

2. OFFICIAL ELECTIONS RESULTS FOR NOVEMBER 15 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ARE STILL NOT AVAILABLE, AND NOT LIKELY TO BE UNTIL EARLY 1977. ARENA PARTY SECRETARY, HOWEVER, HAS MADE AVAILABLE TO US HIS UNOFFICIAL RESULTS AS OF DECEMBER 14 AND COMPUTER PROJECTIONS

WHICH WE THINK WILL GENERALLY APPROXIMATE OFFICIAL RETURNS.

3. ARENA PROJECTS VICTORIES FOR ARENA MAYORALTY CANDIDATES IN 3,142 MUNICIPALITIES WITH 649 GOING TO MDB. BY PERCENTAGE, SPLIT IS ARENA 83/MDB 17. MDB DID BETTER IN COUNCILMEN RACES, WINNING A PROJECTED 11,549 SEATS TO ARENA'S 25,216. PERCENTAGE SPLIT GIVES MDB 31 PERCENT OF COUNCILMEN SEATS; ARENA 69 PERCENT. (DEPARTMENT MAY RECALL THAT MDB DID NOT CONTEST ELECTIONS IN 1,339 MUNICIPALITIES.) IF PROJECTIONS ARE CORRECT, IN COMPARISON TO 1972 MDB NATIONALLY INCREASED ITS NUMBER OF MAYORS FROM 10 PERCENT TO 17 PERCENT AND ITS NUMBER OF COUNCILMEN FROM 16 PERCENT TO 31 PERCENT. MDB IS ALSO PROJECTED TO HAVE MAJORITY CONTROL OF 500 CITY COUNCILS, OR 12 PERCENT OF BRAZIL'S MUNICIPALITIES.

4. IN TERMS OF POPULAR VOTE, WHICH PRESIDENT GEISEL HAD SOUGHT TO MAXIMIZE FOR ARENA AS A POPULAR DISPLAY OF SUPPORT FOR HIS GOVERNMENT, ARENA DATA CLAIMS PARTY HAS RECEIVED 15.5 MILLION TO MDB'S 11.9 MILLION. DATA SHOWS 10.3 MILLION VOTES TO BE EITHER BLANK, VOIDED OR POSSIBLY ABSTENTIONS WITH VOTES OF 88.5 PERCENT OF THE REGISTERED ELECTORATE NOW ACCOUNTED FOR. IT IS UNCLEAR HOW MUCH OF THE 11.5 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE (NEARLY 5 MILLION VOTERS) UNACCOUNTED FOR, EITHER ABSTAINED OR VOTED AND HAS NOT YET BEEN COUNTED.

5. MDB HAS ALSO GIVEN US THEIR UNOFFICIAL FINAL RESULTS WHICH SHOW ARENA WON 16.9 MILLION VERSUS 12.7 MILLION FOR THE MDB. DATA SUPPORTS ARENA'S CLAIM OF A SUBSTANTIAL VICTORY MARGIN. MDB PROJECTS ONLY 605 MAYORALTY VICTORIES IN CONTRAST TO ARENA'S DATA WHICH PROJECTS 649. MDB DATA, HOWEVER, IMPLIES THAT ABOUT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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30 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE VOTED BLANK, HAD THEIR BALLOTS VOIDED, OR ABSTAINED. CORRECTNESS OF PRESIDENTIAL PALACE RELEASED DATA SIMILAR TO MDB'S ON POPULAR VOTE DEC 16. LACKING RESULTS OF ABOUT 200 MUNICIPALITIES, DATA INDICATE MDB ELECTED 586 MAYORS AND CONTROLS 485 CITY COUNCILS.

6. ARENA'S PROJECTION OF FINAL POPULAR VOTE WILL GIVE PARTY 19.2 MILLION TO MDB'S 14.8 MILLION WITH 8.5 MILLION IN BLANK AND VOID VOTES OR ABSTENTIONS. WE INTERPRET DROP IN NUMBER OF BLANKS, VOIDS, AND ABSTENTIONS FROM CURRENT TOTAL OF 10.3 MILLION TO 8.5 MILLION TO MEAN THAT VOIDS ARE STILL BEING CONTESTED AND ARENA EXPECTS TO WIN APPEALS ON A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF THEM.

7. IN ONLY OTHER UNOFFICIAL COMPREHENSIVE REPORTING OF POPULAR VOTE, ESTADO DE SAO PAULO HAS INDICATED THAT ARENA WON 21.3 MILLION VOTES TO MDB'S 15.2 MILLION. ESTADO CLAIMS MDB BEAT ARENA IN THE STATE CAPITALS 4.7 MILLION VOTES TO 3.2 MILLION, BUT LOST HEAVILY

IN THE INTERIOR WHERE ARENA WON 18.1 MILLION VOTES TO MDB'S 10.5 MILLION. MDB'S 3 TO 2 MARGIN IN SAO PAULO CITY AND 2 TO 1 ADVANTAGE IN RIO ACCOUNT FOR MUCH OF THE STRENGTH OF MDB'S URBAN SUCCESS. ESTADO'S DATA ON BLANKS, VOIDED VOTES AND ABSTENTIONS IS INCOMPLETE.

8. COMMENT. WHILE THERE IS DISPARITY IN THE POPULAR VOTE TALLIES, ALL SOURCES ACKNOWLEDGE THAT MDB WON ABOUT 17 PERCENT OF THE MAYORALITIES AND 30 PERCENT OF THE CITY COUNCILMEN. IN TERMS OF THE POPULAR VOTE, ARENA SEEMS LIKELY TO HAVE A MARGIN OF VICTORY OF ABOUT 4 MILLION VOTES. BLANK AND VOIDED VOTES AND ABSTENTIONS APPEAR IN THE RANGE OF 8 TO 12.5 MILLION VOTES (20-30 PERCENT) AND ANY INTERPRETATION OF THEIR MEANING WILL BE DIFFICULT UNTIL WE ARE ABLE TO SEE THE BREAKDOWN. THEIR NUMBER HOWEVER, DOES NOT APPEAR UNUSUALLY LARGE IN THE CONTEXT OF PAST BRAZILIAN ELECTIONS.

9. THE NUMBERS, WHATEVER THEIR SOURCE, PERMIT PRESIDENT GEISEL, WHO CAMPAIGNED HARD, TO CLAIM WITH SOME BASIS AN ARENA VICTORY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE FOR HIM AND HIS ADMINISTRATION. THE PRESIDENT AND ARENA, HOWEVER, ARE AWARE OF THE PARTY'S POOR PERFORMANCE IN BRAZIL'S LARGEST URBAN AREAS AND THE INDUSTRIAL SOUTH. ARENA'S SECRETARY GENERAL TOLD US THAT HIS PARTY WON IN THOSE CITIES WHERE IT HAD A GOOD INCUMBENT MAYOR, PARTY DISCIPLINE, STRONG ORGANIZATION AND SUFFICIENT FUNDS. HE CLAIMED THAT MDB SPENT LARGE AMOUNTS ON ITS LARGELY SUCCESSFUL URBAN CAMPAIGN, BUT WE SERIOUSLY DOUBT THE OPPOSITION OUTSPENT ARENA.

10. FROM MDB'S PERSPECTIVE THE RESULTS ARE A SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENT IN COMPARISON TO 1972, THOUGH SOMEWHAT DISAPPOINTING IN RELATION TO 1974. IN EFFECT, THE PARTY HAS DOUBLED ITS INFLUENCE AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL IN TERMS OF ITS GAINS IN COUNCILMEN SEATS. THAT INCREASE SHOULD TRANSLATE INTO BROADER PARTY ORGANIZATION AT THE GRASSROOTS IN 1978, AND FURTHER ENHANCE THE PROSPECTS OF THE MDB WINNING A FEW GOVERNORSHIPS IF IN FACT DIRECT ELECTIONS ARE PERMITTED. AT FIRST GLANCE THE MDB'S IMPRESSIVE PERFORMANCE IN THE MAJOR CITIES AND THE INDUSTRIAL SOUTH LENDS SOME CREDENCE TO THE ELITIST CLAIM THAT THE BEST EDUCATED, HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOST INDEPENDENT AND ACTIVIST SEGMENT OF THE BRAZILIAN POPULATION HAS MOVED INTO THE OPPOSITION. PROPONENTS OF THIS QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE RESULTS BELIEVE THE MDB URBAN VICTORY IS MORE SIGNIFICANT THAN ARENA'S OVERALL POPULAR VOTE VICTORY BASED ON ITS STRENGTH IN THE INTERIOR. BRAZILIANS REMAIN DIVIDED, HOWEVER, OVER TO WHAT DEGREE ELECTIONS WERE LOCAL PERSONALITY CONTESTS RATHER THAN A PARTY PLEBISCITE WITH IDEOLOGICAL OVERTONES. REGARDLESS OF THESE AMBIGUITIES AND DIFFERING INTERPRETATIONS, THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF HAS NOT HESITATED TO REPRESENT THE RESULTS PUBLICLY AS A SIGNIFICANT VICTORY AND

A MANDATE FOR HIMSELF, ARENA AND THE REVOLUTION. END COMMENT:
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